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614 have the extra connotation of 'ancient'; the latter may mean
778 either literally 'grandfather', or else an ancestor more remote. It is always difficult to determine the proper limits of native categories. *Heratu*, which I have used as synonymous with plant-emblem, would seem with some informants to have a rather more limited application, i.e. it refers to the plant emblem especially *qua* mark of identity; whereas *evebo* is rather a more comprehensive term, covering not only the special plant-emblem ancestor, but the whole march-past of forefathers. However, the plant-emblem is called an
[164] ancestor; and when a man is dead and lies awaiting burial, the women may be heard crying to him as the offspring of his *heratu*—'*Asava-jai, Hombiga-jai!*' i.e. 'Child of Asava, child of Hombiga!' the word *jai* being used in everyday speech as we might use the word 'piccaninny'.

614 Now I have on a number of occasions asked the native
778 what he means by calling the plant emblem his ancestor.
551 Sometimes he cannot give an answer, but very commonly he can, and then it is always the same: 'Our real ancestor', he says, 'was a human being, not a tree; *it was a man with a tree name.*' For once, I believe, our native has given the really true explanation. I will proceed with the evidence for this hypothesis, viz. that the normal *heratu* is a species of plant representing a human ancestor of the same name.

There are certain reasonably authentic incidents in which a human namesake, or rather original, of the *heratu* is well remembered. Thus there is a Binandele clan named Yegaboda whose *heratu* is *watora* the reed. During their latter migrations these people hid from their enemies among the reeds, and here a baby was born to whom was given, in a very characteristic fashion, the name Watora. In due time this child became the chief man of his clan, which adopted *watora*, or the reed, as its *heratu*. So again we find two widely separated branches of the clan Samanahu, one among the Aiga, the other, an emigrant section, among the Binandele. The Aiga section, still retaining their name of Samanahu, have now the alternative *heratu*, *asava* and *hombiga*, evidently acquired subsequently; while the Binandele branch has kept its original *heratu*, the tree *samana*. Both sections, however,

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XIII

CEREMONIES OF MOURNING

764 765 BEFORE commencing a full account of mortuary ceremonies it will be as well to anticipate by a summary to which the reader may turn back for reference in the course of a long and perhaps bewildering description.

(1) First comes the ceremonies of actual burial, which are followed by the widow's seclusion (pp. 210 ff.; 215 ff.).

(2) The widow emerges from her seclusion and assumes the jacket which is the special sign of mourning (pp. 218 ff.).

(3) The widow discards her mourning jacket, and the other mourners give up the voluntary tabus they have undergone (pp. 224 ff.). After a protracted general tabu on the food supplies, there follows,

(4) An important ceremonial feast and dance, accompanied among the northern tribes by a dramatic performance.

(5) The last of the mortuary ceremonies is the ritual disposal of the paraphernalia of this dance and drama (p. 253).

These five stages or landmarks may be separated from one another by intervals of many months. In the course of the present chapter and the next, continual reference will be made to them in order to keep the sequence of events clearly before the reader. The fourth and fifth stages will be dealt with under Dance and Drama, Chapter XIV.

Death and Burial

763 When death occurs in an Orokaiva village the women burst into loud lamentations, and rush to the nearest swamp to bedaub themselves with mud. Sometimes they mistake coma for death, and the dead man awakes in the midst of the lamentations. Sometimes—one might say usually—they begin wailing as soon as they are convinced that the patient is sinking and death is not far off.

I well remember such a scene about a dying infant. The poor child—if it retained consciousness enough to care—might well have been annoyed by a deafening clamour of

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grief, and its last moments were no doubt rendered fewer and more uncomfortable by the attentions of its relatives.

When the victim of this solicitude is finally dead, he is stretched out on his back. His face is painted and his head decorated with ornaments and a feather head-dress. Some of these will be buried with him; but his children will remove and keep the more valuable. The corpse of a man is entirely naked; that of a woman wears a *bo*.

If the deceased be a man of any importance, his body is laid out on a sloping platform (*babari*) in the village. It is made of logs set at an angle of about 20 degrees, and the corpse is laid upon it feet downwards and with arms outstretched. This *babari* is said to be meant for the convenience of the mourners who wish to embrace the corpse.

The posthumous honour of a *babari* is denied to a woman for a curious reason which I have heard several times repeated. Women are too fond of *bivije* or adulterous intercourse, and are therefore undeserving of the dignity of an elevated position. They are laid on a mat on the ground, and the only real regret for them is said to be on the part of those who have enjoyed their favours. And since these latter are ashamed to weep for fear of betraying themselves, the woman goes unwept and unhonoured to her grave. This explanation, needless to say, was derived from male informants, and, in point of fact, the demonstrations of grief at a woman's death are hardly less extravagant than at a man's.

The mourners flock in from all villages in the neighbourhood, pausing on the way to smear themselves with mud, *pusu* (from which they get the name of *pusu-embo* or 'muddy men'). They desert their gardens or whatever work they have in hand at the sound of the *bui*, which repeatedly gives a very long-drawn note as a signal of death. Their attendance is not entirely obligatory, but it is regarded as a matter of decency to attend the funeral of a neighbour: and the relatives of the deceased will be offended if there is not a large muster. It is to be suspected, moreover, that the mourners derive some satisfaction from the very exuberant way they have of showing their grief, and, in the case of the

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many who are but remotely connected with the deceased, it is possible that they find some actual pleasure in surrendering themselves to a violent emotion. Nevertheless, one may definitely discount the belief of some Europeans that the grief of natives in bereavement is not genuine. My own observations have led me to form the contrary opinion, viz. that their grief is distressingly real. The fallacy may have its origin in the fact that a great number of the mourners do wilfully abandon themselves to the excitement of an emotion which is conjured up for the occasion. But one need only look at a bereaved parent or a widow to see that her sorrow, at any rate, is no counterfeit.

At the death of an old man, Handau of Korisata, when his body had been removed from the *babari* because of rain and laid under his house, there was a continual striving among the mourners to get near him. Squatting or kneeling around they would hold him by the hands, the feet, or the neck, or fling themselves down and embrace him. One man, standing with legs astride the corpse, would jog continually up and down and howl in a manner which gave one an actual sensation of hoarseness by listening to him. Another was shaking, apparently uncontrollably, in every limb, while a friend tried to quieten him. A woman was dancing outside, or perhaps rather flinging herself about, while a second woman held her from behind with arms under her arms and around her breasts in the endeavour to restrain her.

It is, in fact, customary at such times for those who are less deeply affected to restrain or protect those who are really besides themselves with grief, or who, in other cases, are shamming too realistically; and sometimes these guardians may even tie ropes about the waists of their charges and thus follow them in order to keep them the better out of mischief. Women make a practice of cutting their foreheads, cheeks, and shoulders with quartz, glass, or knives. They beat themselves on the back with heavy stones. They will lick 'sand-paper' leaves till their tongues bleed, saying, 'He used to give me pig and taro to eat in my mouth: now I will make my mouth bleed'. It would seem that men are somewhat less severe on themselves, though they may cut

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(*a*) Hair shaved in Mourning.
Not an usual mode

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(*b*) The *Baburi* or Exposure Platform for the Corpse

PLATE XXVII [facing p. 212]

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764 152 their shoulders or beat themselves on the forehead with their clubs. Mourners will chew a poisonous root until their mouths and throats are severely corroded; and I know one man whose scarred buttocks afford irremovable evidence of the fact that he deliberately sat down in the fire at a 764 funeral. Even cases of suicide are not altogether uncom- 152 mon. A village constable not long ago poisoned himself 762 with 'New Guinea Dynamite' after his wife's death; a woman who saw both her brother and her son die within a short space of time went and hanged herself with a strip of bark-cloth; and a distracted widower of Wasida took a flying leap (though strangely not a fatal one) over a cliff of some thirty feet into a rocky river-bed. I dislike capping my own story with another man's, but cannot forbear to quote one of Mr. Flint's:

> 'An old man informs me that some time ago a woman held a tomahawk above her head and brought it down with such force that her skull was fractured. She died three days later from the effects of the injury. This woman had evidently been in the habit of hitting herself with a stone club and, to use my informant's words, "Did not savvy the white man's axe".' [1]

764 152 A woman once gave me an odd reason, but perhaps an understanding one, for these violent manifestations of grief. Grief itself is called *jo*, and this woman said that drastic measures such as the hacking of cheeks were meant to put a speedy end to the *jo*. Otherwise it would remain with the mourners for a long time.

764 After lying in state, so to speak, for perhaps a day and night, the body is wrapped in pandanus-leaf mats and bark-cloth for burial. The grave (*use*) is 3 or 4 feet deep. It contains an oblong 'coffin' (*detemba*), the floor of which is made of palm-wood strips like that of a house. The *detemba* is really no more than a strong framework of size sufficient to accommodate the body in a supine position. It is eventually covered with a roofing of poles and a large sheet of bark (*gapa*) to protect the corpse from the earth when it is thrown in.[2]

[1] *Annual Report*, 1924–5, p. 47.

[2] In the Sangara tribe (and possibly in others as well) the grave is undercut on one side at the bottom, the reason being once more to protect the body in its *detemba*

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764 The grave is dug with knives, sticks, and finger-nails, and the earth scooped out with a wooden dish (*tava*). In one instance a number of young men acted as grave-diggers; the deceased (a woman) stood in the various relationships of *aja*, *tata*, *imboti*, *da*, and *bevatu* to them, and they came from six different villages. It seems clear, therefore, that the function of grave-digger does not belong to any particular relatives.

764 152 The body, whether of man or woman, is usually carried from the house to the grave by women. Many crowd around, and when the body is laid down in line with the grave there is a veritable scrum of mourners about it. Each is wailing or dirging independently, and to a listener at close quarters the atmosphere seems to be fairly dancing with the discord, though at a distance their combined voices resolve themselves into a rich monotone. The lamentation of the adult takes a lyrical turn in which extempore words are chanted loudly and with some semblance of rhythm, but I do not forget hearing the young son of a dead woman repeatedly scream, '*Aja, aja!*' as if perhaps his grief were too great even for the restraint of a dirge.

764 537 775 When for a few moments comparative quietness has been secured, an elderly man, holding in one hand a spear and in the other a bunch or ornaments, stands by the corpse and, pressing upon its feet with one of his own, as if to rouse (*ajari*) or attract its attention, he declaims what we might call a valediction. Of this I have several renderings which agree in essence but differ sufficiently to show that this farewell address is not a set form. The gist of it is as follows: 'Go now to a good place, not an evil one; go to the road of the sunshine, not to the road of the rains; go where there are neither mosquitoes nor march-flies, but where there are pigs in plenty and taro in plenty. Send us pigs and send us taro, and we shall make a feast in your honour, and pay-

from the superincumbent earth. In the hilly country of the Direu tribe there is a system of cave burial which is foreign to the Orokaiva at large. The body is here wrapped in bark cloth and encased in a roughly meshed structure of cane. This, supported on a pole between two tuandas or posts, is set up in some inaccessible cave or fissure in the rocks, and allowed to decompose and fall. I am told that when the package has fallen to pieces and only the skeleton is left, the valuable beads or ornaments which were attached to the body are retrieved.

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(*a*) Crowding about the Grave

(*b*) Widow lying in the Grave

PLATE XXVIII

[facing 214]

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ment to those who have mourned for you.' The 'road of the sunshine' (*jji-deita*) was said (when I asked where it was) to be in the east, and the 'road of the rains' in the west, where there are great downpours on the slopes of the Central Range; but it may be said very emphatically that there is no idea of a general Paradise or Elysium in the east, but only of various scattered *sovai-ta-na* or 'villages of the spirits', which are usually in fairly close proximity to the villages of the living. The contrast between sunshine and rain really points to the desired contrast between cheerfulness and gloom, not to that between east and west.

The spear and the handful of ornaments are presented—only in form—to the dead, and he is adjured to present them in turn to the other *sovai* whom he is to meet. He is told to announce his name to them, and the name of his father, to call upon them 'to make way for him, to blow the trumpet, beat the drums, and prepare a feast', and he will hand them these as, it would appear, conciliatory gifts.

When this address is concluded the body is lowered into the grave. The women who are still clinging about it must first be dragged or thrown aside, and this is done by one or two young men with a roughness which is not inexcusable. The grave is only partly filled, and the earth stamped down. In the shallow depression which remains the mourners throw themselves down—as many as can find a place—and veritably wallow in their grief. They almost jostle for position, so much so that I have seen a bereaved husband compelled to push and shoulder his way through a throng of mourners to secure a place at the grave of his wife.

Mourning Seclusion

It is customary among all the tribes for a widow to go into seclusion for some time after her husband's death. In certain tribes the widower is also secluded under similar circumstances, but as this latter custom is not universal I shall in the following section deal solely with the seclusion of the widow.

When the excitement—for such it is—of the funeral has died away, the widow (*doru*) of the deceased is left, perhaps

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765 with one or two other women, at his grave. Formerly the grave was under the house of the deceased; now by Govern- [764] ment regulation it is in the bush at some distance from the village. It is natural that the natives should do their best to evade this regulation, because the custom of burial under the house is no doubt based on sentiment. Informants 765 repeatedly state that they dislike burying their dead at a 152 distance because they are sad or 'belly-sore'. I have also heard that they dislike the thought of a grave neglected and overgrown; but the principal idea is, as informants have stated it to be, that the living cannot bear the parting with the dead. They cling as long as they can even to his inanimate presence. Sometimes in these days the dead are actually buried in the village, though if the fact is discovered or betrayed, the mourners are likely to work out their sorrow in gaol. More commonly the difficulty is overcome by a rather pathetic subterfuge. The grave is placed in the bush not far from the village, and a small house is built over it in which the widow secludes herself, just as in former times she would have been secluded over her husband's grave in her own house. When a Government patrol draws near, the grave shelter is of course empty.

765 The widow's seclusion is a long one, and the greater part of it she spends in her own house, i.e. that of her deceased husband. It is not clear when she is transferred from the grave shelter to the house, though it appears that this may be made the occasion of a feast. (Regarding this feast I have very little information, but it is of minor consequence at any rate, and cannot, I think, be regarded as a regular feature of the cycle of mortuary ceremonies.) While in the shelter the widow sleeps actually in the grave, above the corpse of her husband, which is covered only with a shallow layer of earth. I am told that she will from time to time 765 burrow with her fingers in the earth, and whenever she dis- 775 covers some maggots (*kanyeni*) she will carry them off and deposit them in one place in the bush nearby. Here they accumulate and disappear, being supposedly transformed into the *sovai* of the deceased. I do not know whether this belief and practice (which I found among the Aiga) are of

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third day both he and the animal died, and were buried together. In response to a question my informant said that Divinopa's *sovai* still existed as a cuscus. A case such as this can hardly be made to square with the general belief that the living man becomes a *sovai* at death. One can only lay down the generally accepted doctrine and dismiss a case of this sort as a cheerful aberration.

The two ensuing theories are somewhat isolated, i.e. they were not sufficiently verified by being repeated at other times and in other places, so that they probably do not amount to general beliefs. The corpse of an Orokaiva is wrapped in a mat and laid in a coffin-like structure of wood, to which a number of sticks laid crosswise and lengthwise constitute a lid. According to a group of informants on the River Gira these parts of the 'coffin' (*detemba*) are in some manner animated by the stench (*opu*) of the corpse as it decomposes in the grave, and the mat becomes a cuscus, the framework of the coffin becomes a crocodile, the cross-sticks of the lid become a pig, and the long sticks become snakes. It is worth noting that these informants gave 'one man, one *sovai*' as a rule—with which their theory seems hardly in accord.

The other theory has already been mentioned in another connexion (p. 216). It is that the maggots, which appear somewhat inexplicably from the corpse and [illegible] appear just as mysteriously, have turned into the *sovai*. (In the one or two cases where this theory was put forward it appeared that the *sovai* took the form of a certain bird, though I do not know whether this latter point is essential to the theory.) How widely the belief itself may be held I am unable to say, though it cannot be denied that there is a certain amount of plausibility and even ingenuity about it.

Except for such somewhat fanciful theories we can only say that the native simply believes that the *sovai* comes into existence on the death of a human being, and that he is content to leave the method of transition unexplained.

The Forms of 'Sovai'

When a man dies his *sovai*, as we have seen, is thought to be present in some form about the village. Thus it is that

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crocodile, cuscus, fire-fly, for example—which haunts the bush, and is regarded as dangerous and, on the whole, abominable, but which must not be offended. It is not necessary to deal at any length with this subject of animal reincarnation, which is not relevant to the matter in hand. The spirit of the dead manifests itself in other ways. It may visit the village unseen by human eye; or it may come and stand over the sleeper in his dreams, speak to him, and leave objects of a very tangible nature by his side.

The practical aspect of the old-time Orokaiva religion is largely a placation of the spirits of the dead. It is in the garden that the good results become evident; consequently we find—quite apart from the new cult of Taro—a number of rites or observances which are intended to ensure, through the medium of the spirits of the dead, a greater output in the gardens. The more striking of these observances may be enumerated. In the villages are to be seen the *karau*, or offertory platforms (sometimes with a miniature ladder from the ground which is meant to facilitate the spirit's access to the morsels of decaying food which have been left for it). At the feast and dance the spirit of the dead man in whose honour they are performed is called upon to be present and partake. When a man dies his spirit, accompanied by numerous others, is known sometimes to return almost immediately to his garden to play havoc with the taro in a sort of huff; and, indeed, it is a practice to lie in wait for these ghostly vandals, in the hope that they may be overheard discussing the sorcerer who brought about the death and so permit of identification and revenge. Again, for some reason which was never satisfactorily explained, the garden of the deceased is taboo to his nearest relatives: they fear some malign influence of the spirit upon the vegetables. Lastly, at the actual burial, some old man will stand by the corpse as it lies before the open grave, and pressing with his foot upon that of the dead man as if to secure his attention will cry out,

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'Begone now to a good place, not an ill one; a place where there are no march flies nor mosquitoes; where there are pigs in plenty, and taro in plenty. Send us pigs, and send us taro, and we will make thee a feast'. Instances such as these will show that the native believes his food supply to be governed, or at least influenced, by the spirits of the dead, and that accordingly he has at least one practical reason for seeking their goodwill. It may be said definitely that, before the advent of the Taro cult, the Orokaiva looked to the spirits of his dead for the prosperity of his garden, not to the spirits of the taro itself.

It is necessary to consider briefly the native conception of a 'spirit'. The words *binei*, *sovai*, &c. (p. 25) stand generally for the being which in one form or another continues to exist after the death and burial of the body. It includes rather than coincides with the word 'ghost', as it covers a variety of conceptions, from the unseen and unsubstantial entities who climb the little ladders and dine imperceptibly upon the food offerings, to the reincarnated animals and reptiles of the forest or stream, or further, to the indescribable monsters who abduct men and women, scatter their wits, and leave them to wander in the bush. But all these conceptions have this much in common, that they belong to the life after death.

Now the Taro cult has spread abroad another word. *atiti*; or rather it has added a new meaning to this word Aiga informants and others far removed from the original home of the cult sometimes nowadays use the word *atiti* as synonymous with the being who survives death. But in the Orokaiva tongue *atiti* stands for shadow, reflection, or the mere appearance of anything, be it dead or alive. It does not necessarily imply death, nor does it cover the same vivid concept as *sovai* or *binei*. The new use of the word arises from a misunderstanding. It is acknowledged to belong, in this sense, to the Taro vocabulary, i.e. to a set of terms which have been made popular by the new cult and are used freely by those who only half understand them (vide pp. 39, 48). Buninia dreamed

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X 794 755 754 curing, it is to be feared, goes the implication of sorcery. It may not be without significance that the two or three instances of implied sorcery which have come to my notice are all associated with *Diroga*.

X 794 [711] Within the *Diroga* cult itself there is already disintegration. The majority are *Ki-embo* because of their association with the *ki*, or spear; but there are also *Gishi-embo* and *Asivo-embo*, who affect respectively the *gishi*, or pineapple club, and the *asivo*, or wooden sword. Concerning these latter I have only the scantiest information; and no more regarding a distinction between the 'Bush' *Diroga* men and the 'Salt Water' or coastal *Diroga* men.

There are several other more or less important variants of the Taro cult of which I may describe three, viz. those of the *Eriri* men and the *Hobora* men, and thirdly the cult of Manau.

X 794 158 787 [764] The *Eriri* or 'Rainbow' men are numerous in the Dobodura district. Some years ago one Aragata was mourning the loss of his brother, and after the Orokaiva fashion was embracing his dead body as it lay on the *habara*, or exposure platform, before burial. When Aragata descended from the *habara* he found his legs unsteady, and was forthwith taken in a fit of *jipari*. In the course of this fit, he says, he became aware in some manner that his dead brother's spirit was the cause of it. Further thrills were in store for Aragata, however. That night he dreamt, and in his dream went in search of his brother. The search was fruitless. Aragata found no trace of his kinsman, but came instead to 'the place of the rainbow', where he met one Songe, a man of long ago. Songe (of whom my informant could give no clear account) questioned him and condoled with him, and finally said, 'I give you Taro' (i.e. I make you a Taro man); 'whenever you see a rainbow you will be seized by *jipari*'. Aragata professed that the sight of a rainbow always had the promised effect upon him, and further, that the rainbow and nothing else could produce that effect. Soon, however, he had an enthusiastic following,

X 794 158